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"PASTOR HOH"

MRS. J. HAL SMITH

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Hoh Shiu Chuen is the United Brethren Pastor in Siu Lam, China, and a good one too. Here follows a brief story of his life as he himself related it to me:

“I never really opposed Christianity. I heard more or less about it when I was young, but had my doubts whether it was the true religion. My family belonged to the high official class in the city of Siu Lam and owned sixty acres of land within the city, which was a great deal for a Chinese family. My father also owned many houses and the one in which we lived, was the largest of them all.

“Being a man of the old type, my father wished his sons to be *real men*, so I was early set to the study of literature. I also studied naval arts under private tutors. This was under the old regime, when the empire was still intact. I finally became a soldier and in the course of time was given charge of a company of men, whom I trained in warfare. Then came the republic, with its rulers, who were all thieves and robbers and I quit the whole corrupt government business.

“At last I left Siu Lam and went to a neighboring province to engage in business. This business was selling opium and incense for worship of the gods and the gathering and selling of certain herbs and roots which were used in making wine. I made considerable money, but taxes were so high that it took forty percent of all my gains to pay them. Several other men were associated

with me in the business and even when we thought we had made a large amount, we found, on dividing it, there was not much for each. This was very discouraging and I became quite dissipated.

“Once when I went to the mountains to gather herbs, I fell sick. I went to a town to find a doctor and was led to a hospital where a missionary doctor was in charge. He took me in, treated me kindly, put me to bed and cared for me a week. One day this doctor said to me, ‘We are brothers.’ I supposed he meant that our countries were on friendly terms, but he explained to me that we were brothers because of our mutual relation to the one great Father in Heaven. Finally I said that I must go, but the missionary doctor said I should tarry three days yet, for the illness might return and he wished me to stay until he made sure I was quite well. During the last days of my stay in this hospital, a patient in the room adjoining mine, was constantly grumbling and finding fault with everything and everybody. I asked him if he ever went to hear the preaching of the Christian doctrine. He said he did not, that the foreign preachers were ‘no good’ anyway and all they were after was money. I decided I would go to their services and see if what he had said was true. That was how I heard my first Gospel message. At that service I saw many girls from the Christian school, who were so intelligent and happy that I was amazed to see what the new teaching had done for them.

“Finally I left the hospital and returned home. On the way, I thought a great deal about the Christians and their teaching. I could not forget the good doctor who had kept me three days after I was well, to make sure that my illness would not return.

I thought how serious it would have been if I had left earlier and had a relapse while traveling and away from home. It seemed such a strong coincidence that I should have been led to that hospital. Many other of my countrymen had had this same illness and never found such healing. I thought about the missionaries I had met. From what I had seen of them, it surely was not true that they were here for money. I was convinced that they had come because they loved us and wished to give us the Gospel message. As I meditated, I decided I had nothing to gain by rejecting the Christian message and much to gain by accepting it. I felt it would only be a higher step for me to take and a forward step into clearer light.

“But still I hesitated. Before I left the hospital they had counseled me to find a Christian church where I might attend regularly and learn more. On reaching my old home in Siu Lam, I sought out the church. Rev. Wong Sun Shan, one of my own countrymen, was the pastor. Some of my relatives had already become Christians and united with this church, but we considered them among the lowest of our clan. Feeling something of disgust, I exclaimed, ‘Oh have they taken up with this stuff already!’ I heard them pray and witness for Christ publicly and I was amazed to see how intelligent they had grown. I was forced to say, ‘Why! they are getting ahead of me in intelligence!’ They actually surpassed some of us who had thought ourselves above them. They could speak in public better than we. Marvelling at this miracle in their lives and at the progress they had made in so short a time, I went to church from mere curiosity to hear them pray and speak and to see what more I could learn. I also at-

tended the Bible classes. I already had a start in education and began to thirst for more.

"Many of my old friends began to separate me from their company, thinking I had turned Christian. A few remained, but I knew they were gamblers and soon dropped them, for I knew they had nothing worth while to contribute to my life.

"At last I was constrained to confess my faith in Christ publicly and to pray, but I hesitated to take the final step and be baptized. While in this wavering condition, I talked of going back to my old business, but Pastor Wong entreated me not to do it. He said he had found the Christian way a good one and could recommend it. He suggested that if I was not yet willing to go the whole way, I had better keep on praying and witnessing and coming to Bible Classes. The more I thought about returning to my business, the more I was convinced that I could not live a Christian life and at the same time sell opium, incense, and materials for making wine. Then I met an American missionary of the United Brethren Mission, Rev. F. W. Davis. I had a long talk with him and finally told him I had decided to be baptized three months later. He at once asked, 'Do you wish to give the devil three months more in his chance at your life?' He told me with great earnestness that the duty of those who were Christians is to make the Gospel known to others by living upright lives and preaching the Message of Salvation.

"At last I realized that the grip of Christ was upon me and that my life must be dedicated fully to Him for service. Mr. Davis wrote to the Theological Seminary and arranged that I should enter and study for the ministry. On entering, I was asked if

I had ever been baptized. I was strongly tempted to lie and say, 'I have been,' feeling they would otherwise reject me; but truth triumphed. I told them I had not, but would be baptized the very next day, and I was. I attended the Theological Seminary for three years at my own expense.

"Before going to the Seminary I had seen a piece of land I wished very much to buy, but finally decided that I would put what little I had saved into Christian education. So far as money is concerned, I have nothing besides my salary, now, but even at that I have more than my brothers, so they cannot accuse me of having lost anything by serving the Lord.

"During the early days of my Christian life, my wife and mother opposed me bitterly. Mother had never seriously objected when I was out for a night gambling. She would let me in at any hour of the night. But when I went to a Christian service she declared that she would not permit me to enter. After a time, my wife and mother both became Christians. They gave up gambling and have had training in a Mission School which receives women with children. I now have five children—three boys and two girls. One of my sisters is now in Miller Seminary at Siu Lam.

"Since yielding fully to God, I seem to have entered a new world. All of life has been transformed. My first pastorate was a country church, where I spent two years. Later I was moved to Siu Lam. During the five years of my ministry, God has enabled me to win a great many Chinese people to Christ. One-hundred-ten of them have been baptized and united with my own church."

